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ABSTRACT

This guide describes methods to help parents and others reduce the unacceptable behaviors of children with multiple sensory impairments and replace those behaviors with acceptable ones. The guide recommends that the behavior change program begin with simple changes so that both the parents and the child gain experience in changing behavior. The guide is based on the principle that children act or behave to meet their needs and that behavior is not "good" or "bad" but rather "acceptable" or "unacceptable." Behaviors targeted for change must be objectively identified, antecedent events must be observed, and the level of the target behavior must be measured. A behavior change program can then be designed, involving positive reinforcement, prompting, shaping, and maintenance and generalization techniques. Unacceptable behaviors can be reduced by identifying the consequences that follow from the child's unacceptable behavior and eliminating them. Existing techniques for decreasing unacceptable behavior include extinction techniques, rewarding an incompatible (acceptable) behavior, time-out, overcorrection, and severe punishment (not recommended and addressed only because some parents do resort to it). (JDD)

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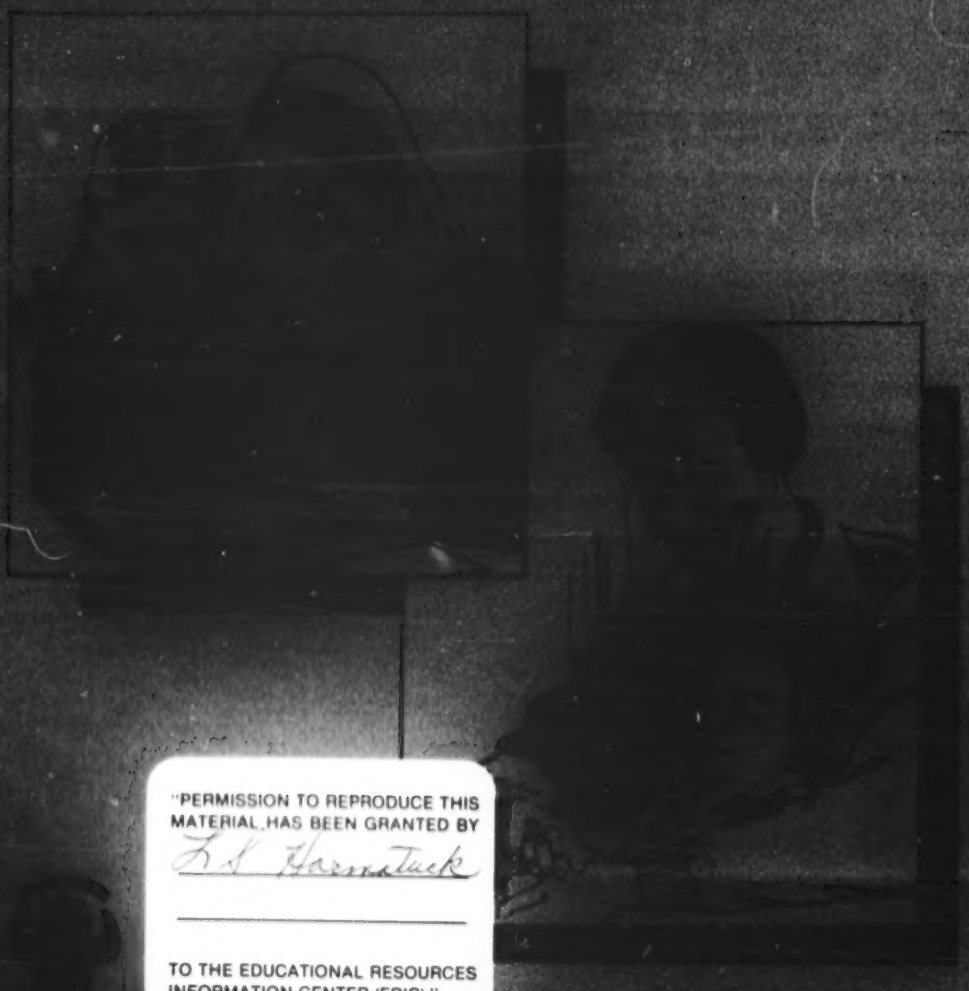
ASSESSMENT

GUIDE FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH DUAL SENSORY IMPAIRMENTS



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Behavior Management Guide for Parents of Children with Dual Sensory Impairments

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Introduction

Rearing and educating a child often is a challenging and rewarding experience. For parents of children with multiple sensory impairments, the challenges and rewards usually are even greater. Along with this greater challenge comes the need for those involved with a child with such impairment to understand and practice the techniques that effectively teach the child acceptable behaviors.

While changing the behaviors of a handicapped child takes a positive attitude, courage, knowledge, and patience, the long-range benefits for the child and the parents make the effort worthwhile. This guide recommends that your child's behavior change program begin with simple changes so that both the parents and the child gain experience in changing behavior. Over time, the parents and the child can change more complex behaviors.

This guide—made possible through the efforts of the Great Lakes Regional Center for Deaf/Blind Education, Excellence in Education, and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction—describes several effective methods which can help parents and others reduce the child's unacceptable behaviors and replace them with acceptable ones. Its intent is to aid parents of children with dual sensory impairments to help their child become a responsible, independent, well-adjusted adult.

Developing a Behavior Change Program

Behavior is an expression of a need or an attempt to meet a need. All of us, including children, use behaviors to meet our needs.

In his book, *What Every Parent Should Know*, Thomas Gordon identifies two simple principles about children's behavior.

Principle I: Like everyone else, children have needs; and to meet their needs, they act or behave.

Principle II: Children don't misbehave; they simply behave to meet their needs.

Since behavior serves to meet our needs, we shouldn't label it as being "good" or "bad," but rather as "acceptable" or "unacceptable." When children use unacceptable behavior, they do it to get or to do something for themselves, not to do something to others.

Most children learn that destructive or disruptive behavior gets immediate and undivided attention, more so than does acceptable behavior. Some handicapped children also discover they can use their handicap to get attention and sympathy.

Instead of being judgmental or angry, parents need to remember their child is only trying to meet his or her needs. As adults, parents have the ability to change their child's unacceptable behavior into socially acceptable conduct.

Describing Behaviors

Before you decide which of your child's behaviors you would like to change (called target behaviors), you need to recognize and describe each behavior.

An accurate description of a behavior reports what was observed in objective, or realistic, terms. In other words, an objective description doesn't judge "good" or "bad" behavior; it simply states what happens. Objective descriptions define the behavior in units that are specific, observable, and measurable. For example, the statement, "Karen isn't very friendly," isn't objective because it's based on an impression. Karen may just appear unfriendly because she is shy, or tired, or ill. On the other hand, the statement, "Johnny says 'Mommy, I love you,'" is an action that you can see and count.

To make sure that a behavior is objectively described, ask yourself the following questions:

- Can you count the number of times or the number of minutes your child engages in the target behavior?
- Can you see the child performing the target behavior? Can others recognize the target behavior?
- Is the target behavior an individual action and not several actions put together?

If you can answer "yes" to all these questions, you are ready to list the behaviors you would like your child to change. If you cannot, you should redescribe the behaviors until they pass this test.

Identifying Behaviors to Change

The next step in changing unacceptable behavior is to clearly identify the behaviors you want to change. While you do this, it's important to set goals your child can reach. Also, you can adjust your expectations to fit changing situations, such as changes in your child's living/educational settings or his or her visual or hearing

acuity. Make two lists; one of the unacceptable behaviors you would like to decrease and one of the acceptable behaviors you would like to see your child do more often.

For behaviors you would like to increase, select ones that play a major role in your child's day-to-day life, such as an effective communication system. Some target behaviors you should try to decrease include destructive behaviors which could harm your child, other people, or property and disruptive behaviors which distract others or cause them to dislike your child.

It's best to work on one or two behaviors at a time, and at first, choose ones you think would be the easiest to increase or decrease. After you gain some experience, you will feel more confident in tackling the more difficult behaviors.

Events That Trigger and Encourage Behaviors

After you select the target behaviors, observe your child as he or she engages in these behaviors. Notice the events that occur just before and after your child expresses a target behavior. Events that happen just before, or trigger, the target behavior are called *antecedents*. The events that occur after the target behavior starts, and encourages your child to repeat this behavior, are called *consequences*. For example

> Linda gave her son, Jason, a hair brush and asked him to brush his hair. Jason began to cry, scream, and thrash about. When Linda insisted that Jason brush his hair, his temper tantrum became worse, so she gave up.

Giving Jason the hair brush and asking him to brush his hair are the antecedents, or triggers, which caused Jason to throw a temper tantrum. When Linda gave up—the consequence—Jason learned that by throwing a tantrum he could get out of doing something he didn't want to do. Without intending to do so, Linda increased the chances that Jason will throw a tantrum whenever he's asked to brush his hair.

Sometimes the antecedents and consequences are not so easy to identify. If that is the case, you need to carefully watch your child until it's clear what circumstances trigger and encourage the target behavior.

You can use the following questions as a guideline to identify the antecedents and consequences:

1. What is the antecedent? Does someone say something to, look at, or go near the child which triggers the target behavior?
2. What is the consequence? What happens immediately after the target behavior occurs? Does the child get his or her way? Does someone comfort the child? Or move away from the child?

Counting the Target Behavior

After you can identify what causes the target behavior, you are ready to observe and count the behavior. It's helpful to have this information for two reasons.

1. You may find that the target behavior is less of a problem than you thought.
2. By measuring the behavior, you can gauge the success of your behavior change program.

Measuring the level of the target behavior lets you decide if the problem is serious enough to warrant a behavior change program. There are several ways of

measuring, including frequency recording, duration recording, and the percent of opportunities to respond.

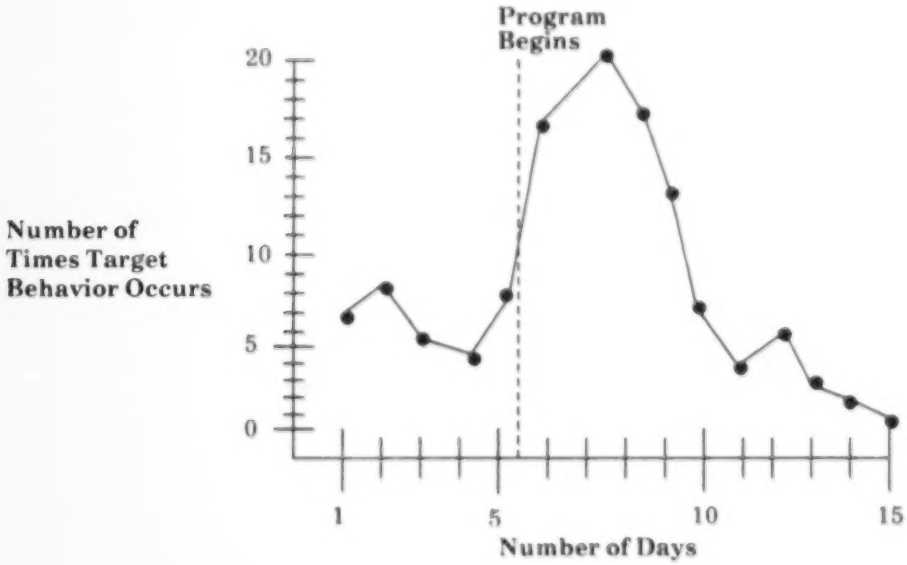
Frequency recording. This method counts the number of times a target behavior happens. Fights, talking back, tantrums, and self-hits are some examples of actions that are easy to count. After recording these actions for several days, you should be able to decide if the behavior needs to be changed.

Duration recording. In some cases, it's more important to know how long a behavior lasts than how many times it happens. For example, parents can get a better idea of how much body rocking their child does by recording how long rather than how often the child rocks. Again, you should use this method for several days before you decide if the behavior needs to be changed.

Percent of opportunities to respond. With this technique, you count the number of requests you make to your child and the number of times he or she complies. By keeping track of this information for several days, you can determine the percent your child complies to your requests.

Evaluating Your Child's Behavior Change Program

If you decide to change a target behavior, you must continue to measure the behavior to determine if the program is successful. You can measure your child's progress, and the success of the behavior change program, by making a simple chart, plotting the information, and connecting the dots. The following sample diagram is one way to measure your child's progress and the program's success. The target behavior typically increases at the beginning of the program.



Positive Reinforcement

Behavior change programs aimed at increasing an acceptable behavior usually involve positive reinforcement, which uses rewards to encourage the individual to adopt the acceptable behavior.

Behavior followed by a positive consequence (reward) is more likely to continue under similar circumstances than if the behavior is followed by a negative consequence or is ignored. For example, if a severely retarded, hearing impaired child receives a reward after speaking an understandable word, that child will be encouraged to speak in the future.

Factors Influencing Reinforcement

Many things can serve as rewards. Touchable, or tangible, reinforcers, such as a new toy or food, and activity reinforcers, such as a few more minutes of television or music, are a few examples. You can also use social reinforcers, such as words of praise, a hug, a kiss, or a smile.

To make your child's behavior change program work successfully, carefully choose the rewards you will use. Reinforcers for multiply handicapped children can be difficult to identify, so you may have to experiment with several rewards to find which ones your child prefers.

Early in the behavior change program, you need to reinforce the target behavior each time it happens with both a tangible reward, such as a toy or piece of fruit, and an intangible one, such as a hug or praise. For this reason, it's important to select tangible rewards that your child will not quickly tire of, such as candy bars. After a while, you can abandon the tangible rewards and use only social reinforcers.

If you decide to use words of praise, vary your comments and sound enthusiastic. Using the same words over and over again can become boring and irritating to your child. It also helps to tell your child what he or she is doing correctly, such as "I like the way you made your bed, Tom."

You also need to consider how easy a reward is to give, how time efficient it is, and its cost. If a reward takes too much time or energy, it may not be delivered often enough to be effective. The most successful rewards are simple and quick, such as a hug or praise. However, a reward that is time consuming can be considered time efficient in the long run if it changes behavior rapidly. The following example describes a situation that uses a time-consuming social reward.

> Jerald was a five-year-old child with a severe hearing loss and severe mental retardation. His parents were quite concerned about Jerald's serious delays in developing basic motor skills. Although Jerald could walk, he would crawl everywhere he wanted to go. Jerald's parents decided to implement a reinforcement program to promote his independent walking. The program involved briefly restraining (holding the child at the waist) Jerald whenever he tried to crawl and then physically prompting walking (physically guiding the child to a standing position). When Jerald would walk one or two steps, his parents would reward him with a few minutes of "one-to-one" attention. Each day they asked Jerald to walk an extra step, and after only nine days of intervention, he was walking independently.

While selecting an effective reward is the most important element, there are other factors that influence the success of a behavior change program.

Improperly rewarding a reinforcer reduces the success of a behavior change program. To be the most successful, reward your child as soon as he or she displays the proper behavior. Waiting too long after your child performs the correct response may confuse him or her, and your child may associate the reward with a different behavior. If you reward your child when he or she doesn't perform the desired behavior, the child won't understand what you're trying to teach.

As mentioned earlier, at the start of this behavior change program the reward should be given every time your child performs the target behavior. After the target behavior reaches the desired level, it can be maintained—even strengthened—by less frequent reinforcement. You also may eliminate the tangible reinforcer and use just social reinforcers.

A major goal of a behavior change program is for the child to learn to display acceptable behavior for everyone. The best way to accomplish this is to have other people involved in the program, such as teachers, siblings, and friends. By having other people in the program, your child learns to use acceptable behavior in many situations and for many people. However, this requires close communication among all those involved in your child's behavior program. Each person must be able to recognize and properly reward your child's target behavior. Otherwise, your child will become confused and the program will fail.

Prompts and Cues

Sometimes a behavior you would like your child to use doesn't occur very often. Even though a target behavior may happen infrequently, rewarding these few occurrences may be enough to encourage your child to do it more often. However, if this wait-and-reward strategy is too time consuming, you can use prompts and cues to bring about a target behavior. Prompts and cues include instructions, modeling, physical guidance, and shaping.

Instructions. The most direct method of increasing the occurrence of a behavior is to simply ask your child to display the target behavior. This method is not suitable for all children because the child needs to understand directions. However, it can be a very efficient method and you may want to try it.

Modeling. With modeling, you act out the target behavior for your child and reward him or her when he or she imitates your actions.

Physical guidance. You can manually assist your child to produce a target behavior by using physical guidance. The following case provides a good example.

> Brian, age six, is hearing impaired and profoundly mentally retarded. His parents decided that getting Brian to sign would be a good target behavior to increase. Besides learning a useful skill, they felt that Brian's unacceptable behavior might decrease if he could effectively express himself.
>
> Since Brian enjoyed food, his parents chose food as a reinforcer and mealtime as the time to promote sign use. Brian faced one of his parents during meals and that parent would show him a piece of food and sign the word "eat." The parent would wait five to seven seconds for Brian to imitate the sign. If he did not, his parent would take Brian's hand, move it through the sign "eat," and then hug and praise Brian and give him the food.
>
> Over the course of a month, Brian's parents gradually reduced the physical prompt and used only the modeling prompt (signing "eat"). Eventually, this prompt was phased out by increasing the time delay between showing Brian the food and signing the word. Brian was soon

able to indicate his desire to eat. His parents developed a similar program for drinking.

Shaping. Other behaviors are more difficult and take longer to learn, and the shaping method rewards the child for making attempts at performing the target behavior. This method is more complex than instructions, modeling, or physical guidance, so shaping takes more time to change a behavior. It's best to start small and reward the first signs of acceptable behavior and to let your child progress at his or her own pace. You should reinforce your child every time he or she tries to perform the target behavior, even if he or she only roughly accomplishes the task. Gradually, you need only reward the more exact attempts. The following example describes how shaping, paired with instruction, helped a child learn to interact with his peers.

> Chris was hearing impaired and severely mentally retarded. Although she was enrolled in a social skills development class at school, Chris seldom interacted with her peers. Instead, she would stand by herself or seek an adult's company. Chris' parents decided to use the shaping procedure to get their daughter to interact with the other children.
>
> At first, Chris' parents and the social skills program staff verbally invited Chris to join them. Each time she did, she was rewarded. After Chris successfully adapted to this situation, the staff introduced a classmate (a different child each time) into the group. Now Chris was only rewarded when she interacted with the other child, and she sometimes needed verbal prompting. Gradually, the staff members left Chris alone with the other child, and Chris was rewarded only when she was in that situation. Eventually, Chris was rewarded only when she voluntarily played with her classmates.

In each procedure, Chris' parents and the staff gradually reduced the prompts and cues until Chris no longer needed them.

Developing Complex Behaviors

In many behavior change programs, the individual learns to perform complex behaviors which consist of several responses arranged in a sequence, called a chaining behavior.

To teach a chaining behavior, you must first identify and list each behavior in the chain. Then you can begin to teach your child these behaviors by using positive reinforcement. You can start either at the beginning of the chain and work forward (forward chaining) or at the end and work backward (backward chaining). The goal is to teach your child to perform all the steps in the proper sequence following a single instruction.

At first, reward your child for a single correct response, then for two responses in the proper sequence, and so on, until only the last response in the chain is rewarded.

Maintaining and Generalizing a Behavior

For a training program to be considered successful, your child should "maintain" and "generalize" the learned behavior, that is he or she should display the acceptable behavior most of the time and in most situations. If that isn't the case, you need to continue or expand your child's training program.

The most common approach to maintain and generalize a behavior is to train your child in situations similar to the ones he or she encounter daily. For example, when you're training your child social skills, such as sharing, you probably would like to see your child display this behavior in a variety of settings (school, playground, at home); with a variety of people (classmates, friends, siblings); and with a small amount of social praise.

In the beginning of the program, it's best to start with a simple situation so there are few things that may distract your child. Gradually, you can add new things until the setting is similar to the conditions in which you want your child to display the behavior. Whenever possible, use natural settings to train your child.

Summary

The key element in a reinforcement program is the reward. Rewards fall into three categories, they are

- tangible rewards, such as food and toys;
- social rewards, including hugs and praise; and
- activity rewards, such as listening to music and playing.

While many things can be rewards, you need to carefully select ones that encourage your child to perform the target behavior.

The following factors help make a reinforcement program successful:

- Give the reward only after your child displays the target behavior.
- Present the reward immediately after your child performs the target behavior so your child recognizes and understands the response being rewarded.
- In the beginning of the program, reward your child every time he or she performs the target behavior. When your child exercises the behavior at the level you want, maintain and strengthen the behavior with occasional reinforcement.
- Your reinforcement program will be more effective if various people are involved in it. Since consistency is a key element in any reinforcement program, it's important that everyone involved in the program can correctly recognize and reward the target behavior.

If your child seldom engages in the target behavior, several methods can encourage your child to perform the behavior. If your child responds to language, simply tell him or her what you like him or her to do.

In other cases, you could use the modeling procedure to act out the target behavior to your child and reward him or her when he or she imitates your actions. Since many handicapped children do not imitate very well, you may decide to use physical guidance in which you use physical prompts or cues to encourage your child to perform the behavior.

You also may select a shaping procedure which reinforces behaviors that are roughly similar to the target behaviors. Often, more than one method can be incorporated into your child's behavior change program.

Sometimes a target behavior involves combining several responses into a certain order, or a behavioral chain. In these cases, you need to train your child to perform each "link" in the chain and then teach him or her the proper order. To do this, you can use either forward chaining or backward chaining.

Maintenance and generalization techniques help make your behavior change program a success. Through maintenance, social reinforcers are used less and less until the natural environment supports your child's acceptable behavior. Generalization teaches your child to use his or her acceptable behavior in most settings and for most people long after the training program ends.

Reducing Unacceptable Behaviors

While positive reinforcement is the primary technique used to increase acceptable behaviors, several procedures exist that reduce unacceptable behaviors. These include extinction, rewarding an incompatible behavior, time-outs, overcorrection, and severe punishment. The last method is not advised but is discussed later in this section.

Your child displays an unacceptable behavior because you or someone else rewarded, probably unintentionally, him or her for performing it. To reduce the unacceptable behavior, you and others who interact with your child must stop rewarding your child for it.

First, you need to identify the consequences that reward your child's unacceptable behavior and eliminate them. One common reward for a child's unacceptable behavior is the attention the child receives. It may help to refer back to "Events That Encourage and Trigger Behaviors" on page 3.

After you identify and eliminate the reward that encourages an unacceptable behavior, you should expect the behavior to increase before it decreases.

Extinction

Withdrawing the reinforcer of unacceptable behavior, usually by ignoring the behavior and thus not providing a consequence, is the basis of this technique. It has the following advantages:

- it is fairly easy for the child to understand,
- it eliminates unacceptable behavior,
- it produces a long-lasting effect, and
- it avoids using punishment.

Extinction also has several disadvantages, including the following:

- it requires incredible consistency to be effective;
- it may take some time to see results; and
- the behavior, if ignored, may injure the child or someone or something else.

Rewarding an Incompatible Behavior

This technique is based on the idea that many unacceptable behaviors have an incompatible, or opposite, acceptable behavior that could take its place. For example, repetitive hand movements (stereotypy) can be replaced by having the child use his or her hands to do something worthwhile, such as color or draw or play with a toy. By rewarding your child for performing such incompatible, acceptable behaviors, you can reduce the unacceptable behavior and promote an acceptable one.

The success of this technique depends upon your ability

- to identify an incompatible behavior to replace the unacceptable one and
- to find a reward powerful enough to sway your child to perform, and eventually adopt, the incompatible behavior.

Finding an incompatible behavior which is educational and/or socially appropriate can take a good deal of thought and creativity. For example, a stereotypic

hand-flapping behavior could be replaced with several incompatible behaviors such as sitting on the hands, putting them into pockets, or laying the hands flat on a table top. However, none of these activities would raise child's level of functioning. On the other hand, replacing the hand-flapping behavior with a coloring or drawing activity could help your child improve his or her motor coordination.

Because this technique has the twofold potential of teaching an acceptable, and possibly useful, behavior while eliminating an unacceptable one, you should consider trying it before using a punishment-based procedure.

Time-Outs

The time-out method withdraws a child from an attractive and rewarding situation and puts him or her in an area without any interesting objects or distractions for a certain amount of time immediately after he or she performs an unacceptable behavior.

To be effective, you must make sure that the situation you remove your child from is truly rewarding. If you take your child from an unpleasant situation, a time-out will be rewarding to him or her.

Because your child's room probably contains toys, books, and other things to entertain him or her, it's not an suitable place to have a time-out. You can set aside a small area for time-outs if you have enough room in your home. Otherwise, your child can take time-outs by sitting and facing a remote corner in your kitchen or living room. The important thing is that the time-out area is without any objects to entertain or distract your child.

When your child needs a time-out, you should put him or her in the time-out area in a calm, matter-of-fact manner with as little verbal and emotional interaction as possible. You should use this same approach when putting your child back into the rewarding situation after the time-out. Then you should respond to your child in a normal way, without sounding angry, hurt, or frustrated.

You can let your child return to the rewarding situation a few minutes after the unacceptable behavior has stopped; three to five minutes for young children and no longer than 15 minutes for adolescents. Don't force your child to stay in the time-out area for an extended period.

Also, remember to reward your child for behaving in an acceptable way when he or she is in a rewarding situation.

A variation in the time-out method, called withdrawal of rewards, involves removing the reward, such as a toy, when the child engages in the unacceptable behavior. As before, you should remove—and return when the behavior stops—the reward in a calm, matter-of-fact manner. Again, after returning the reward, you should respond to your child in a normal way, and praise him or her whenever your child displays acceptable behavior.

To summarize, a time-out should be

- used when your child is in a situation he or she finds rewarding,
- administered in a matter-of-fact manner following the unacceptable behavior and when reintroducing your child back into the rewarding situation, and
- used for only the target behavior.

Overcorrection

Overcorrection uses mild punishment to discourage unacceptable behavior, and it has two basic parts—restitutional overcorrection and positive-practice overcorrection.

Restitutional overcorrection restores the environment to a condition much better than before the disruption. For example, a child who scribbles on a wall must clean the whole wall, not just erase the marks he or she made.

If the environment is not disrupted by the unacceptable behavior, you can use positive-practice overcorrection. This method repeats the acceptable form of an unacceptable behavior. For example, a class runs to line up in front of the room for recess. If the teacher used positive-practice overcorrection, he or she would have the children sit back down and then make them practice several times, while reciting the rules to them, the "right way" to assemble for recess.

Severe Punishment

Severe punishment, including physical punishment, is not recommended; it is addressed here only because some parents do resort to it as a means or correcting their child's behavior.

This form of punishment is used because it has three powerful benefits. First, it usually quickly stops the unacceptable behavior and has some long-term effects. Second, it provides the child with a clear image of inappropriate or dangerous behavior. Finally, other children are less likely to engage in the inappropriate behavior if they witness its consequences.

However, the disadvantages of using severe punishment far outweigh the benefits. Some disadvantages include the following:

- While severe punishment often reduces a child's unacceptable behavior, it does not change it to a desirable form.
- Although severe punishment may reduce or eliminate a particular unacceptable behavior, other ones may develop.
- Severe punishment often produces emotional responses in the child, such as anxiety or fear.
- The child may become aggressive or hostile toward the person who delivers this type of punishment.
- In addition to not performing the unacceptable behavior, the child may withdraw and avoid engaging in other acceptable activities.
- Severe punishment may have no effect on the child's unacceptable behavior. It may even lead to an increase in the behavior if the child views the attention he or she receives as a reward.

Severe punishment is justified only under the most extreme cases of unacceptable behavior, when safety is endangered, or when other strategies such as reinforcement, extinction, or time-outs have failed.

If you decide to use severe punishment, you should administer it consistently and immediately after your child performs the unacceptable behavior. Also, reward your child for performing acceptable behaviors and those which are incompatible with the unacceptable behavior. This reinforcement teaches your child expected behaviors and provides him or her with an opportunity to experience success.

Summary

You may use a number of techniques to decrease you child's unacceptable behavior.

The extinction method involves withholding a reinforcer that has been maintaining or increasing an unacceptable behavior. Often your attention is the reward, so simply ignoring your child's unacceptable behavior is the consequence that works best in this method.

While extinction is usually easy for the child to understand and often eliminates the unacceptable behavior, some behaviors, such as those that present a danger to your child or others, cannot be ignored.

Reinforcing an incompatible, or opposite, behavior not only reduces an unacceptable behavior, it also has the potential of teaching your child an acceptable one by replacing the unacceptable behavior. You can accomplish this by distracting your child from an unacceptable behavior and encouraging, and rewarding, him or her to engage in an acceptable, incompatible one.

It's best to select an incompatible behavior that is educational or socially beneficial to your child and one your child has done before. You must also make sure that the incompatible behavior does not become a reward for the unacceptable behavior, otherwise the unacceptable behavior will increase. If the incompatible behavior is truly replacing the unacceptable behavior the unacceptable behavior will decrease.

A time-out physically withdraws your child from an enjoyable situation after he or she performs the unacceptable behavior and places him or her into an area without any items to entertain or distract the child. After your child has stayed in the time-out area for a few minutes, he or she should be allowed to return to the rewarding situation.

It's best to maintain a matter-of-fact manner when you remove your child from and return him or her to the rewarding situation. You also need to treat your child as if the time-out had not taken place by interacting with him or her as you were before the incident.

Overcorrection has two components, restitution and positive practice, which can be used together or singly. Restitution overcorrection has the child restore the disturbed area to a better condition than it was in before the incident. With positive practice, the child practices the acceptable behavior over and over again whenever he or she displays the unacceptable behavior.

The disadvantages of severe punishment far outweigh the benefits. However, if you do select this method to change you child's behavior, it's best to reduce and eliminate the severe punishment as soon as possible from your child's behavior change program.

Suggestions and Guidelines

1. Gain some knowledge about your own behavior before you consider changing the behavior of your child. Understanding your own behavior will help you become a skilled and humane teacher of the child's behavior change program. You may even discover that you need to change your behavior in order to change your child's.
2. Work with simple behavior changes before you tackle the more complex ones. The skill you gain from your early experiences will help you plan and execute the more difficult programs.
3. Be prepared to see an increase in your child's unacceptable behavior in the beginning of your behavior change program. When your child realizes that the unacceptable behavior isn't rewarded any longer, the frequency and intensity of that behavior should decline. It is during this time that it helps to keep a record of the behavior.
4. If the behavior change program appears to be unsuccessful, try to figure out why it is failing before you change or discontinue it. There are many circumstances that could be hindering its success. You should consider some of the following questions:

- Does your child know what is expected of him or her? For nonverbal children, make sure that your planned consequences immediately follow the target behavior. With verbal children, ask them what will happen if they behave in a given manner.
- Does everyone involved in the program understand what behaviors they are watching for and what consequence they are to use? Make sure everyone working in the program understands it before using it on your child.
- Are the consequences, such as a rewards, working as they should? If they are not, you may want to review the type of consequence you're using, the amount or duration of the consequence, the timing of the consequence following the target behavior, and the pleasure or displeasure you child associates with the consequence.
- Is the program being carried out consistently and correctly? This is a common reason why behavior programs fail.

Knowledge is power, and people with power are responsible for using it wisely and beneficially. You now have the power to increase or decrease your child's behaviors, and the responsibility to use it wisely.

Glossary

Chaining – learning a behavior step by step, starting either at the beginning (forward chaining) or at the end going backward (backward chaining)

Duration recording – measuring the length of time a behavior lasts

Extinction – reducing poor behavior by taking away those rewards which follow the behavior

Frequency recording – the counting of a behavior each time it happens

Generalizing – using a behavior outside the learned situation

Maintaining – keeping the desired behavior over a period of time

Modeling – demonstrating to another the desired behavior

Overcorrection– a punishment-based procedure used to reduce an unacceptable behavior

Percent of opportunities to respond – behaviors that are counted in relation to opportunities provided

Physical guidance – use of a body prompt to cause a behavior

Positive-practice overcorrection – repeating the positive form of an unacceptable behavior

Positive reinforcement – providing a reward for a desired response to encourage use of the response again

Restitutional overcorrection – restoration of a disturbed or damaged area to a condition better than before the disruption

Rewarding – reducing unacceptable behavior by giving rewards for desired behavior

Shaping – step-by-step changes in behavior that lead toward a desired behavior or response

Social reinforcers – words or actions that encourage acceptable behavior

Target behavior – behavior selected for modification or change

Time-out – a technique that, after an occurance of an unacceptable behavior, removes one from a rewarding situation into an area devoid of rewards or distractions for a short period of time

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